



A Message From The Secretary

The demands on this agency are tremendous. Just watch the evening news and you'll hear the concerns from national and world public health officials about a potential bird flu pandemic and the obesity crisis; or national security experts discussing possible use of biological, chemical or radiological attacks on our country; or environmental

scientists concerned about the destruction of our natural resources due to our ever-changing and fast-paced lifestyles demanding more energy, more technology, more end-results. So, if you ever doubted that the work you do every day at KDHE doesn't have an impact, think again. No matter what your role here, you are all a part of a vital organization helping Kansans become healthier people in a healthier environment.

Just days ago, the World Health Organization warned the world is in grave danger of a pandemic flu caused by the spread of bird flu. It has claimed 45 lives in Asia in the past year, primarily among individuals who had contact with sick chickens, but there is great concern the virus could change and become easily spread from person to person. KDHE's Bureau of Epidemiology and Disease Prevention (BEDP) staff has developed a pandemic flu plan, which is now being reviewed and revised based on a new pandemic plan recently released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

In addition, it's important to note that much of the agency's planning and preparation for biological, radiological, and chemical terrorism is also preparing us, our local health partners and our emergency planning partners for both the possibility and the likelihood of pandemic flu, other natural disease outbreaks or natural disasters.

To make our state better prepared for a pandemic flu or terrorist attack, KDHE has also introduced legislation to improve our quarantine laws in the state. The bill modifies language to address group quarantines and also gives local and state health officials more options in a crisis situation.

KDHE has introduced legislation to improve education of college students regarding bacterial meningitis, and legislation to encourage breastfeeding, which has been proven to reduce illness and improve the overall health status of infants.

In addition, KDHE is joining Governor Sebelius and many state agencies in pushing for legislation requiring products with pseudoephedrine, which can be used to make methamphetamines, to be sold only by pharmacies and require the purchaser to sign a form. The legislation, similar to a law passed in Oklahoma, is expected to reduce the ease with which criminals can get products to make meth.

Next month is a very important month for the agency. KDHE will host the agency's first Minority Health Conference on April 13, and will again take part in a pre-Earth Day event at the Kansas History Museum on April 14 to promote efforts to preserve and protect our environment. The Minority Health Conference: Connecting Kansas Communities will bring together health professionals and community champions from

across the state, to discuss new strategies and resources to improve the health of our diverse populations. The April 14 event draws students from around the state to learn from KDHE and many other partners about what can be done to protect the state and preserve it for future enjoyment and many more generations. In addition, students (K-12) with a love for art can participate in the KDHE annual 'Don't Spoil It Calendar' Contest. Encourage any student you know to enter, and point them to our Web site, www.kdhe.state.ks.us to learn more about it. Winners will receive prizes, get their picture taken with the Governor and tour the Statehouse later this spring.

Getting children involved in protecting our environment and thinking about health at an early time in their lives is invaluable. It can mean preventing youth from getting into the bad behaviors that many of us adults have become accustomed to and will have a more challenging time stopping.

In an effort to get better data to improve our children's health, KDHE is moving forward with the Healthy Kansas: *Taking Steps Together* initiative. Recently, Governor Sebelius announced the formation of a Child Health Advisory Committee as part of this initiative. The committee will identify state priorities for child health and promote policies to improve the health of Kansas children. KDHE will work with at least 135 schools this year, which will voluntarily collect data to assist in determining the overweight prevalence of Kansas children. KDHE's initiative also involves working with businesses and agencies that assist the elderly, all in an effort to improve physical activity, improve nutrition, and decrease tobacco use in Kansas.

As you can see from the many issues our agency is involved in, the work you do at KDHE impacts lives. Thank you for your tireless efforts, your creativity and fresh ideas, and never-ending dedication to improving Kansas.

Be well,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Sebelius', written in a cursive style.